



## **Static** by **Rose DiVerona**

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**Summary:** Steve doesn't think he's part of the group. Dustin sets him straight.

## Static

A/N: In honor of the new Season 3 trailer. And because I can't get enough of Steve and Dustin. (May eventually turn into a series of Steve-centric one-shots.)

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### Static

It was the walkie talkie, Steve decided, that sealed the deal.

The kids were always on the things. Two days after the gate was closed, Mike nonchalantly presented one to Eleven.

"You've been a Party member for a long time," he told her. "Way past time for you to have your own."

El, of course, looked at it like Mike had handed her the moon.

Two weeks later, Lucas repeated the gesture to Max. She rolled her eyes and acted like it was no big deal, but her cheeks were flushed with pleasure.

A walkie talkie meant you were In.

Steve thought it was cute. He *wasn't* jealous.

Joyce Byers planned a holiday get-together for the group before Christmas. All Party members were invited, plus Hopper and Nancy. Steve overheard Jonathan talking about it, and he couldn't help but feel a pang. He wasn't a Party member or someone's sibling or even someone's boyfriend. He was just Steve, and he hadn't even been able to protect the kids like he'd promised.

He was part of Hawkins' "in-the-know" group, but he wasn't part of The Group.

At least, that's what he thought until Dustin mentioned the celebration on the way home from the Snow Ball.

"You *are* coming, aren't you?"

Steve's grip tightened on the steering wheel.

"I wasn't invited."

Dustin's gaping expression would have been comical, if Steve had been in the mood to laugh.

"Are you insane? Of course you're invited! You're one of us, Steve." Dustin snapped his fingers. "Oh, that reminds me! I've got something for you." As they pulled up to the Hendersons' house, he bolted out the door of Steve's car. "Wait right there!"

Steve sighed and leaned his head against the headrest. He hoped it wasn't another pamphlet on that wacky nerd game the kids liked to play. Dustin kept trying to lure him in, but damn it, he still had a *little* bit of a reputation to uphold.

Dustin reappeared and thrust a paper bag under Steve's nose. "Open it!" He was practically bouncing on the seat in anticipation.

Hesitantly, Steve opened the package and peered inside. He felt a lump forming in his throat as he slowly pulled a walkie talkie out of the bag.

"Sorry it took a little longer than the others," Dustin said anxiously. "I had to save up my allowance." When Steve was silent, just staring at the thing, he began to talk very fast. "I mean, it's yours if you *want* it, but if you think it's dumb or whatever—"

"But I'm not a member of the Party," Steve said quietly.

Dustin rolled his eyes. "Of course you are. You, like, *saved* the Party. At least that's what El said. And she wasn't even *there*, but Mike told her everything, and whatever El says is pretty much law, and *she* said you should have one, so." He drew in a breath.

Steve swallowed. "Really?"

Dustin nodded. "It's already set to the frequency we all use. When I call you, you *better* answer."

Steve finally shook himself out of the stupor he'd slipped into and

managed to grin at the attempted stern expression on the younger boy's face.

"Thanks, kid," he said quietly. "This is...pretty cool."

"I knew you'd like it," Dustin said matter-of-factly, moving to exit the car for the second time. "So I'll see you at the Byers'?"

Steve bit his lip. "I don't know..."

Dustin stabbed a finger in his face. "I'll see you at the Byers', Harrington," he said, emphasizing each word. He shut the door before Steve could respond.

Steve looked at the walkie talkie for a moment longer before setting it carefully on the passenger's seat and driving away. And if there was a borderline dopey grin on his face, well, no one was there to see it.